THE WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL NEWS

ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL (Incorporated),
6 YORK BUILDINGS, ADELPHI, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2.

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VOL. XXI.—NEW SERIES. *No.* 80.—*JANUARY*, 1918.

COUNCIL NOTES.

THE Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 27, at 2.30 P.M. Lady Brassey has kindly consented to hold the meeting at her house, 24 Park Lane. A Conference on 'Domestic Service as a Modern Industry' will follow the business meeting, at 3 P.M. This is a subject of paramount importance at the present moment, and the Executive Committee expect that many members will wish to bring friends to the Conference. This they are asked to do up to the limits of the accommodation, viz., 150 seats. The scheme which the Executive Committee wish to bring before the members of the Council is published below, and will form the basis for discussion at the Conference.

The Executive Committee have to regret the resignation of the Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Frederic Franklin, who, owing to frequent unavoidable absence from Town, finds it impossible to give as much time to the work as she feels to be necessary.

SCHEME FOR THE RE-ORGANIZATION OF DOMESTIC SERVICE.

MEMORANDUM.

A LARGER number of women were employed as domestic servants before the war than in any other occupation. This number was, however, decreasing proportionately to the women in all occupations, and this decrease has been growing steadily for some years.

Domestic service competed, as an employment, with the manual trades and occupations, and drew workers from the same class. Factory work, for many reasons, gained in favour, while domestic service declined.

The demand for domestic servants already exceeded the supply, and this disparity showed no sign of abating.

At the same time the supply of clerks augmented rapidly, more rapidly than the demand for their services.

All these facts have been emphasised by war conditions.

From the investigation made by the Women's Industrial Council, it appears that the two main objections to domestic service are :—

1. The restraint occasioned by living-in, which entailed being always " on duty."

2. The noted social distinction between employers and employed. In this respect the domestic workers are especially singled out and differentiated from all other workers. Domestic work is not less skilled than that of a shop assistant or a typist, and yet in this country the social status is far inferior.

The Women's Industrial Council is of opinion that, could these drawbacks be eliminated or even considerably modified, domestic work could, and should, take its standing equally with other occupations. In short, the occupation should be brought into line with other modern industries. It would then open up a field of employment for better educated women and could take its stand with that of the clerk, typist, or shop assistant. The importance of a high standard of general education for domestic workers cannot be too strongly emphasised.

To this end the Women's Industrial Council suggest that, as far as possible, domestic work should be arranged on the daily service plan.

It is realised that, owing to the nature of the work, and in country districts, this would not be universally possible, but if the " living-in " system were replaced by a skilled, self-respecting corps of daily workers in all centres large enough to furnish sufficient demand and supply, the remaining number of domestic servants willing to continue in service under the " living-in " system, would probably suffice for the needs of the households where such service is necessary.

There seems to be no reason, inherent in domestic work, which need render it an undesirable occupation, apart from the customs of service to which we have alluded. If a more intelligent conception of the needs of a household were displayed in the building of houses much, if not all, the really unpleasant, rough, and toilsome work of the house could be eliminated, and thus a field of employment opened to many women who are entirely opposed to it as at present constituted.

One advantage that would accrue from the system of daily service paid for by the hour is that it would be directly to the advantage of the employer to minimise the amount of service often demanded from the workers. The demand for houses arranged to eliminate as much of the toilsome work would prove irresistible, and architects and builders would be obliged to consider this aspect more closely.

DAILY DOMESTIC WORKERS.

Scheme.

1. Centres to be established in residential districts of all large towns from which domestic workers are supplied daily.

2. The Centres to be run on self-supporting lines. A skilled and competent Manager to be in charge of each Centre, whose duties shall comprise the supervision, supply, and payment of the workers.

3. An Advisory Committee to be attached to each Centre, composed of representatives of employers and workers, which would consider rates of pay, hours of work, uniforms, and holidays.

4. Workers to be of two kinds :—

(*a*) Highly skilled specialised workers, *i.e.*, cooks, housemaids, parlourmaids, children's maids, &c.

(*b*) General workers able to act in all capacities for smaller houses or flats.

5. Workers shall be paid a fixed weekly wage, and all fees paid by employers to the Manager.

6. Workers should be employed for a limited number of hours per day. Households requiring both late and early service would have to employ relays of workers.

7. Complaints about the conduct of the workers should be addressed to the Manager of the Centre.

8. Domestic Training Centres to be established in connection with the above, for which purpose grants could be asked from the Board of Education.

9. The learners could be trained for the most part in the Training Centres, but could also be sent out in charge of skilled workers in the capacity of a " mate," like a " plumber's boy."

10. The Training Centre could be used as a boarding-house or restaurant for domestic and other workers.

11. A special effort should be made to attract as domestic workers women of a secondary education.

12. The Centres could develop in many ways :—

(*a*) the establishment of cookery classes open to the public ;

(*b*) the supply of cooked meals ;

(*c*) the establishment of nursery centres ;

(*d*) ,, ,, mending centres ;

(*e*) ,, ,, laundry centres, &c.

REPORT ON INDUSTRY AND MOTHERHOOD INQUIRY.

PART II.

I.

MOTHERS AND LAUNDRY WORK.

In the autumn of 1916 the Women's Industrial Council, having considered and discussed the possibility of ascertaining what employments or conditions of employment were injurious to women as mothers, determined to undertake a small, experimental investigation in some particular branch of industry—or perhaps two or three such investigations; and the conduct of the inquiry was entrusted to me. An unfortunate failure of health on my part at the close of last year—when, however, the first portion of our investigation was nearly complete—has delayed both the carrying out of the second portion—at present in progress—and the writing of the Report, the first part of which is now laid before readers of *The Women's Industrial News*.

Before deciding upon our particular field of inquiry we consulted various experienced people, of whom those well acquainted with industrial life saw very clearly the difficulty of so eliminating personal and domestic factors as to obtain anything like conclusive evidence that effects recorded were due to industrial causes; while those most familiar with cases of maternity declared it difficult to lay down beforehand any statement of activities or conditions likely to be injurious to expectant mothers. A woman doctor of wide experience told me that many women, *provided they were well fed*, appeared able to undergo violent exertions or to perform heavy tasks with absolute impunity. On the other hand, instances are probably known to all of us in which some comparatively slight action has led to a miscarriage, or in which the children of extremely energetic mothers appear to be weakly.

The choice of an industry, too, presented difficulties. It was obviously desirable to avoid: (*a*) a trade in which women were competing, more or less as newcomers, against men; and (*b*) a trade in which the workers, or any large proportion of them, suffered from severe poverty; and these exclusions, between them, covered a very considerable portion of war-time industry. Finally, it was decided to begin with an investigation into the work and conditions of married and widowed laundry-workers in Acton.

Our aim was that with which the Council always enters upon its inquiries: the finding out of facts. We did not desire to show that any particular work either was or was not injurious to mothers. We had no case either to support or to impugn by any evidence that we might obtain; and we were not even at all sure that it was possible to obtain any evidence of value. But we were convinced that the attempt was worth making and that it was well to make it, at first, upon a comparatively small scale.

Of the inquiry, in practice, the first point that stands out is the quite extraordinary kindness and helpfulness of every official person with whom it brought us into contact. These officials were of many degrees, from heads of departments to typists; all were very busy, and we were but members of the outside public—intrusive amateurs—coming in and taking up their valuable time; yet without exception they entered sympathetically into our wishes, went out of their way to give us assistance and showed interest in our attempt. There are two of us who will never forget, for instance, how a kind typist secured for us the loan of a local map (maps were not being reprinted and we could not buy one), from which Miss Agnes Kelley was able to trace two plans of the Acton laundry district. The saving of time, steps, and fatigue which we owe to that lady, whose name we do not even know, cannot be measured.

The reason, I believe, why all these officials behaved so cordially to us was that they all cared heartily about the work in which they were engaged and that the interest of the work irradiated such outside persons as showed any concern for it.

The part of Acton in which most laundry-workers live lies on the side of a hill; many of the streets are comparatively new, and a large proportion of the houses have but two floors, each floor forming a separate habitation. There is a good deal of open space, part of which, however, is covered by railway lines, and the whole district is airy and breezy. As the laundries are mostly close at hand a very large number of the workers go home to their midday meal, and many also to tea in the afternoon. It is interesting to be in the streets of this district between twelve and one o'clock—as, of course, we frequently were—and to observe their usual quiet emptiness become suddenly thronged and noisy. Men, women, and school children are all wending their way homeward; and the first point which strikes observers accustomed to other parts of London is that most of these children look healthy and few of them conspicuously poor. The level of cleanness and apparent prosperity is high. Most of the women, too, are cleaner and brighter-complexioned than they would be, for example, in Bethnal Green.

This first impression was confirmed by further experience. The proportion of slatternly women was small; the proportion of thoughtful, competent, intelligent women high; among the children it was almost the exception to find a baby who was not round, heavy, and rosy, or a toddler who was not sturdy and well grown. It seemed pretty clear that the children under school age in this laundry district were, on the whole, neither weakly nor stunted. Of the women it could not be said so surely that they showed no trace of being the worse for their toil. We saw, indeed, many healthy, hearty, and often handsome women; but we saw also a good many who were worn, thin, worried, weak-eyed, and suffering in various ways; and among these one who, at 50, had been overworked to the verge of the grave. She, as it happens, had had no children.

The method of inquiry was that of personal interviews with workers, and the following schedule of headings was employed. We had begun by drafting a much longer and fuller one; but even with this we found it almost impossible ever to get full particulars. On the delicate point of the husband's character, for instance, a direct question can seldom be put, and information is apt to be volunteered only by wives who can say proudly: "I've a good husband," or by those whose husbands are so notoriously bad that the pair are no longer living together. Our decided opinion, however, is that most of the husbands were decent, steady men and good fathers; and that most of the households were full of family affection.

A.

1. *Personal Particulars.*
   - (*a*) Married or widowed.
   - (*b*) Soldier's wife or widow (allowance, if any).
   - (*c*) Age.
   - (*d*) Where brought up (town or country).
   - (*e*) Nationality (Jewish workers to be noted).
   - (*f*) Reasons for working.
   - (*g*) General appearance.

2. *Husband's.*
   - (*a*) Occupation.
   - (*b*) Wages.
   - (*c*) Health.
   - (*d*) Sobriety.

B. Particulars of Employment.

1. *Work.*
   - (*a*) Branch of work.
   - (*b*) Hours.
   - (*c*) Wages.
   - (*d*) Machinery (if any).
   - (*e*) Are there working expenses? (materials, charges, &c.).
   - (*f*) At what age was work begun?

2. *Fatigue.*
   - (*a*) Standing.
   - (*b*) Long hours.
   - (*c*) Overtime.
   - (*d*) Home to midday meal?

3. *Conditions of workplace.*

C. Home and Children.

1. *Rent and number of rooms.*
2. *General appearance of:—*
   - (*a*) Home.
   - (*b*) Children.
3. *Children.*
   - (*a*) Alive (health).
   - (*b*) Dead (causes of death).
4. *Miscarriages or Still Births.*
5. *Confinement.*
   - (*a*) How long before did mother cease work?
   - (*b*) How long after keep away from work?
   - (*c*) How attended?
   - (*d*) Had the household help?
   - (*e*) Infant nursed, or how fed?
   - (*f*) How were babies cared for?

6. *Mother's own opinion as to effects of work upon health.*
   (*a*) During pregnancy and childbirth.
   (*b*) On infants.
   (*c*) During monthly period.

D. REMARKS.

We visited about eighty workers, although, for various reasons, but seventy-two case papers were drawn up. The great majority of these women were ironers; indeed, the disparity between the numbers of washers and of ironers, respectively, strikes one, at first sight, as mysterious. Two statements made to us seem to explain it. One, which we heard over and over again, is that all heavy washing is done by men, not only where machinery is used, but even in hand laundries. We were repeatedly told that "no women wash sheets," and more than once the detail was added that the men used "rope brushes." The process of "dollying" or "punching"—which belongs to the washing of heavy articles—is also ascribed exclusively to men; although women who do laundry-work at home, "on their own" as they say, probably do some dollying. We have some evidence, however, that small hand laundries send sheets to be done at steam laundries. The second statement, which we heard twice—once from an intelligent young woman whose relatives ran laundries, and who seemed to speak with knowledge, and once from a woman who had worked in large steam laundries—was that many women who wash in Acton live outside, in Shepherd's Bush, Notting Dale, and Hammersmith—all rather poorer and rougher districts. Such women, naturally, did not come under our observation, either in the homes which we visited or in the streets at the dinner hour, since they could not go home to their meal. Their existence probably explains the establishment of dining rooms (which, in a place like Acton, seemed to us, when we first heard of it, so superfluous) in some of the large laundries.

Here arose a fresh difficulty. Ought we to have visited the districts named and sought out those workers in Acton who do not live in Acton and whose surroundings and conditions are quite different? Is any real comparison possible between the effects of an occupation upon a woman living, for instance, in a Kensal Rise slum and upon one living in an Acton flat, with open spaces about her and clean, respectable neighbours all along the street? We felt that our purpose was not to make a survey of the laundry trade, but to trace, if possible, the effects of occupation upon a group of women whose general conditions of life were similar; and we left these outside workers unvisited, although, if health had permitted, I should have liked, for my own satisfaction, to look up some of them. Their exclusion no doubt prevents our report from presenting anything like a general view of the Acton laundry trade.

WASHERS.

Of the few washers whom we saw most were "fine washers," *i.e.*, women who wash delicate articles by hand. Their work demands

considerable skill and no little care, and is not in itself hard. A first-rate fine-washer may be a highly-prized and indispensable employee. One whom we saw in an advanced state of heart disease and who seemed literally dying of overwork said that the manageress under whom she had been working kept sending for her to go back.

Case No. 12 is that of a machine washer, the machine in this case being run by a gas engine. She furnished no further particulars and is described as " a rather untidy, worn woman of a rough type and very hardworked." She says of herself that she is " no scholard."

Mrs. A. (No. 40) is a washer in a hand laundry, and says that men generally do the heavy washing, but that women are doing some of it now, and that employers are advertising for women and offering 4*s.* a day. She is described as " rather tired looking ; poor physique ; poor health ; not very intelligent ; has evidently had a lot of trouble and hard times."

Mrs. B. (No. 1), who was very unwell when visited, said that she had recently been lifting wet sheets out of the copper (" men's work," as she explained), and coming fatigued from the steam into the open air had caught a heavy cold. Her symptoms as she described them seemed to suggest that her " cold " had been an attack of pleurisy.

Washers generally work four days a week and the wages quoted to us range from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.* Their daily hours no doubt vary according to the laundry in which they work, and will be similar to those of ironers.

Ironers.

Ironing with heavy irons looks like very hard work ; but the women who practise it assure us that when they have learned to use the proper muscles of the shoulder and to throw the weight from the waist instead of from the hips their work is not really fatiguing. They praise it as being " clean all through and always warm " or " warm and dry." Not one of them complained of heat from the irons, although we noticed several cases of weak, slightly inflamed, or bleared-looking eyes.

Most of those whom we saw object to gas irons ; several speak of headaches, dizziness, and nausea produced by the fumes ; one attributes to them her sufferings from gastritis, and another declares that she became blinded and unable to see anything for twenty minutes at a time. A third magnanimously says that there *may* be inoffensive gas irons. Three women were found who used and did not dislike gas irons. Mrs. C. (No. 56), " a splendidly healthy young woman," said : " Your constitution has to get used to them and then they don't affect you at all." Mrs. D. (No. 22), " healthy but not robust," admits that the fumes used to make her feel ill until she took milk. She prefers these irons as being " less heavy, saving pressure and saving the feet," this last economy arising, no doubt, from work being done continuously with the same iron. The third woman simply said that she " didn't mind " gas irons. No woman,

therefore, among those whom we saw said that she had known gas irons from which fumes did not arise.

Ironers are paid sometimes by time, sometimes by the piece. Most of the " best ironers," or " finery ironers," whom we saw were piece-workers, while the general ironers were mostly time-workers. Several women told us that they preferred piecework because they found it convenient to begin somewhat late or to sit and rest for a few minutes now and again, their time being, as they said, their own. One woman, however, said that piece-workers worked harder. One piece-worker complained of being ill-paid, and instanced the ironing of twelve linen aprons with straps and bibs for 3*d*. Yet if the dozen could be ironed (as I think they could) in half-an-hour, she was earning at the rate of 6*d*. an hour or, allowing for a lessened speed as the day went on, at least 4*s*. a day.

The most usual time-wage seemed to be from 3*s*. to 3*s*. 6*d*. a day. " Best " piece-workers will make " about 4*s*." A few may make more. Very few women mentioned to us that they were receiving a war bonus, although two women complained of not receiving one. From observations recently made it appears probable that the bonus has become more common during the past year. The bonus is often contingent upon punctuality or upon the work done being considered satisfactory. I think the wages named to us probably did not generally include a bonus ; although in such a case as that of the woman who received 2*s*. 6*d*. a day before the war and 3*s*. 6*d*. since, the rise may have been by way of bonus. " Beer money " at the rate of 2*s*. a week was mentioned in two or three cases.

One or two elder women speak of having formerly earned 5*s*. 6*d*. to 6*s*. 6*d*. a day—probably at piecework ; but they also speak ot having worked inordinately long hours. Wages had clearly rather risen than fallen, but there did not appear, in the last months of 1916, to have been a rise at all commensurate with the increase that had already taken place in the prices of food. By that time, too, there was evidence that the allowances to the dependents of soldiers (which during the first year of the war made many households comparatively prosperous) were becoming inadequate.

Hours were from 8 to 8, 8.30 to 8, 9 to 8 ; and since the compulsory screening of lights some laundries had been closing at 7. One employer finishes the day at 6.30 and is said to report that gas is saved and output not lessened. Ironers work generally but four or four and a half days a week, the whole of Monday being left for domestic duties, and woman after woman spoke of this arrangement as being an advantage of their trade. Many added, however, that Monday was the hardest day of their week. All the women, I believe, who expressed an opinion upon the point (and a good many did) declared that to stay at home, minding house and children, was harder work than that of the laundry.

Dryers.

Fetching damp clothes from a steaming wash-house, hanging them on lines in the open air, and afterwards reaching them down when dry is a trying occupation, and is acknowledged to be so by the women who pursue it. In steam laundries drying is generally done in special compartments heated to a very high temperature; and it seems clear that exposure to this extreme heat is much less felt than the sudden changes of temperature in out-of-door drying.

Of the six dryers whom we saw not one gave an impression of good health; three are described as looking worn or overworked; two were very small; and one seemed dazed and was extraordinarily dull.

More than one woman who was not herself a dryer expressed the opinion that drying was unsuitable work for expectant mothers because of the stretching and the heat.

Calender Hands.

We saw eight calenderers, of whom two said that they "felt" the steam, or the long hours, or the standing, or all three; one, that not everybody could bear the steam and that some women fainted; and one that she found overtime tiring. A fifth, who had at one time been a dryer, said that work at the calender was not nearly so hard as drying and sorting; a sixth—a delicate woman—who had gone out to do daily housework, declared her work at the laundry much easier and said it did not tire her. The seventh, who works not because she must but because she chooses, and who is the mother of two handsome and healthy children, says that the work is not harmful "if you look after yourself and stop a few months before" the birth of a child. The eighth, a heavy, stupid young woman, expressed no opinion, but has left a laundry where, she says, the hours were from 8 to 9 (the fact, probably, being that overtime was frequent), to become a munition worker with shorter hours.

We have but four first-hand cases of shirt and collar machinists, but several other workers spoke of having seen the machines worked, and an investigator has seen them in use in Acton laundries. Both collar and shirt machines are worked by a treadle, pressed down by one foot. The machines employed in the United States appear to be worked always by the same foot, but every Acton witness speaks of being able to alternate the feet. An objectionable feature of the shirt machine is that the flat board which forms part of it comes forward and tends to hit the operator in the lower part of the stomach. One woman spoke of this as occurring when the treadle was in front, but not in some machines with a treadle at the side. The tendency was remarked in all the machines seen in Acton. Several women told us that pregnant women were not supposed to use these machines. "But," said one, "they do, because of the good pay." The statements made to us certainly indicate that one of the workers among our four cases must have been at work before the births of some of her children. One woman said that employers were very

particular about not employing expectant mothers on shirt machines, but none of the employers visited said so, although one—a mother herself—said that it might not be good for a mother. It did not appear, however, that an expectant mother was actually thus engaged in any of the laundries visited.

The wages quoted to us were: 5*s*. a day for four days a week; "a guinea and upwards"; and a guinea.

Packers and Sorters.

Our cases include four packers and sorters; and we heard of several daughters working at packing and sorting.

In one of our first-hand cases work had been given up at the birth of the first baby and not resumed. In another work had been given up on marriage, but resumed when the husband was taken into the army. Only one woman (No. 65) mentioned her wages: "about a guinea." She went in, she said, at midday on Mondays and remained after the other workers had finished on Saturdays. Mrs. O. (No. 8) said that she sorted on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and packed on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. She found the standing tired her, and said she thought young girls felt the strain. Mrs. O., who looked a little tired and worn, was a very neat and very intelligent woman, country-bred, and with charming manners. She spoke well of the laundry in which she worked, and told us, with a smile, that she sent her own washing there, having it called for like any other customer. We did not hear of any other woman who put out her washing. Many women said that they did it on Mondays and, indeed, more than one came from it, wiping her hands to speak to us—a circumstance "rather disencouraging" to inquirers, who, at the best of times, can but feel themselves something of interlopers.

Preparers.

Neither of the two preparers among our seventy-two cases described her work; but I understood from another informant that the preparer damps down articles for the ironer. In both cases the wages were given as 3*s*. a day. One woman—evidently ill and very unhealthy-looking—said she felt the standing; the other works only occasionally and imparted hardly any information.

Eight women said that they had done "all kinds of laundry work" or "everything except ironing." One of them, a woman between 30 and 40, said she had begun, at the mangle, as a child of 10. A grandmother, in a household of three persons representing three generations, takes washing at home, and another grandmother does ironing at home. No. 61, an attractive and superior young woman, comfortably married, who has been trained in all branches of hand work, also takes in occasional ironing for laundries. One mother who used to work in the laundry now "takes in a little washing to do with her own," and thinks the second task heavier than the first. Finally, No. 42, a strong woman of about 55, takes

in washing and does it apparently single-handed, " dollying " and all.

The facts collected about the health of these women as mothers and about the health and survival of their children must be left over to a second part of this Report.

CLEMENTINA BLACK.

(*To be concluded in the next issue.*)

REVIEWS.

The Town Labourer : 1760–1832. By J. L. and Barbara Hammond. (Longmans, 1917.)

ONE of the authors of ' The Town Labourer ' was at one time a frequent and valued contributor to these pages, and it is therefore a special pleasure to us to welcome in the new work produced jointly by her husband and herself the most important addition to industrial history that has appeared for some years. The book is a study of the Industrial Revolution, on the human rather than on the mechanical side. As the authors point out, early writers thought that inventions had lightened the task of labour, but closer study showed that machinery had itself introduced a wearing tension. " The nervous strain of watching machinery and working with machinery aged men and women faster than the heaviest physical exertions." And it was not only the life of man that was thus given to factory drudgery. " Women and children were shut out from the daylight as well." They were employed in mines as well as factories. " The political economy of the age valued the new industry as offering rapid and tempting prizes to the spirit of gain, which was regarded as the great motive power of human progress " (p. 327). " Peace, order, and progress all turned on discipline ; the rough artisans must not be allowed to act or think for themselves, but must be made to accept the rule of their masters without question ; they must take what wages their masters, who were the best judges of the circumstances of the trade, chose to give them " (p. 113). Manual workers were to be completely at the mercy of their employers, who on their part were under no sort of social discipline at all.

In matters of trade and industry it is no exaggeration to say, in the Hammonds' phrase, that the State abdicated in favour of the employers. " The employer's law was to be the public law " (p. 113). In English history there had been a great tradition of State regulation in the interests of the community. The individual was not allowed to pursue his way with complete disregard of the social effect of his actions. Whatever may have been the defects or unsuitability of particular measures of this kind, they did, at least, constitute a recognition of social obligation. But in the eighteenth century such a recognition was held to be necessary on one side only, and that the weaker. At a time when the growth of capital and its concentration in larger masses had given economic power hitherto unexampled to the employers, these last were allowed to establish

themselves as virtual autocrats. Each man was a law unto himself, with no responsibility for his treatment of the "hands" he employed Nor did the State recognise any responsibility for housing conditions. A Home Office paper quoted at p. 24 says: "Too often the dwelling of the factory family is no home; it sometimes is a cellar, which includes no cookery, no washing, no making, no mending, no decencies of life, no invitations to the fireside."

The most intensely interesting part of an interesting and poignant book is perhaps the description of the hope and courage which inspired these oppressed workers, in the face of repression and persecution, to persist in their efforts to combine for mutual assistance and protection. Women were sometimes associated with these efforts; it appears that on the occasion of a strike in 1818 men and women received equal strike pay.

The writers have done well to publish their most moving work during the continuance of the present war, for the history of those troubles contains many a warning for the yet more terrible troubles of the present. To quote from the Preface: "New lessons have been learned from the sacrifice made by every home, in the struggle with a spirit that presents the most sinister aspects of the industrial system in a military form. For as the world sees what kind of life Europe would lead under the shadow of a gospel that makes a god of military power, so it comes to understand what humanity must lose if it makes a god of industrial power. On the will and capacity of the nation to bring to its problems the ideal for which the noblest of its sons have given their lives, the future of England depends."

B. L. H.

MEMORANDUM ON THE QUESTION OF THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A MINISTRY OF HEALTH, DRAWN UP BY THE STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE OF INDUSTRIAL WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS.

THE urgent necessity for the speedy formation of a Ministry of Health is widely recognised. The Standing Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations have issued this Memorandum with the object of hastening the movements of our legislators and of enlightening the public conscience as to the provisions which the Bill should contain. The Scheme has three headings: (1) Proposals of the Insurance Organisations; (2) Attitude of the Local Government Board; (3) Recommendations. The Committee are of the opinion that a new Ministry of Health should be created which should include all the scattered health functions at present administered by different departments; but that although Insurance should be one of these, it is most undesirable for the Insurance Commissions to form the basis of the work. Insurance affects only a portion of the community; moreover, the Insurance Commission has no

adequate machinery to cope with the vital problems of Maternity and Infancy work; their present methods of dealing with these matters is not such as to win the confidence of married women. The health services must be entirely dissociated from the Poor Law, that is to say, if they hope to gain the trust of the working population. The Maternity Department of the new Ministry should be largely staffed by women, and the already existing powers of the Local Health Authorities ought to be largely extended. Every effort should be made to ensure the rapid passing of the Bill and its effective action when it comes into force; with this end in view the appointment of a Royal Commission, involving a delay of months, is highly to be deprecated. Reports should now be prepared on Medical Midwifery and Nursing Services, the co-ordination of the various administrative bodies, and kindred subjects. I. H.

Women in the Engineering Trades. By Barbara Drake. (Fabian Research Department, 1917, 2*s.* 6*d.*)

ONE sometimes wonders whether posterity, supposing it to attain sufficient freedom from war and war preparations to be able to look at the economic history of these troubled times with philosophic interest and detachment, will view the Great War mainly as an immense impetus and stimulus to the Industrial Revolution, or will see it rather as being itself conditioned thereby, a long-prepared and portentous result of the growth of capital and the use of power and machinery. Whichever view posterity may take, it is certain that Mrs. Drake has made a quite invaluable contribution to the subject. Whilst an enormous literature had grown up on the subject of the industrial revolution in textiles, the traditional occupations of women from pre-historic times, very little had been written on the changes effected by new methods in the metal and engineering trades. These trades have been the province of the skilled male artificer. Women may very likely have acted as subordinate helpers even under the mediæval guild system, and in the eighteenth century there are signs that they were employed in metal under the quasi-capitalistic development that seems to have in some trades preceded the introduction of machinery. But it was in the nineteenth century, following on the adoption of mechanical power and the development of the factory system, that the entrance of women into these trades became important. The tendency of machinery in its earlier stages is towards the break up of a process into several simple operations. Some of these will be extremely rough, unskilled work; some will require a certain deftness of finger and lightness of touch. As a managing foreman was heard to remark: "There are two kinds of work women do in a factory: one is the kind that requires light, deft fingering, and which men can't do themselves; the other is the kind that is so dull and hard men don't want to do it at all."

In these subordinate kinds of work women readily found an entrance to the trade; but trouble has often arisen over the efforts

of employers to put them on to higher skilled and better paid work. In these cases motives have been extremely mixed on both sides. Employers have, no doubt, believed themselves to be—perhaps in some cases really have been—actuated by a benevolent desire to widen the scope of female labour and raise its remuneration ; though, on the other hand, they have been largely influenced by the desire of drawing upon reserves of labour which, even though paid a good deal better than previously, would still be far cheaper than male labour. The probability that women workers would be more docile to the employer and much less influenced by the union was also a powerful attraction. On the other hand, the men in their resistance to the employment of women were no doubt actuated, not by merely selfish, individual motives, but by a genuine concern lest the standard of life for all should be weakened by the introduction of blackleg labour ; but it must be owned that they have been often blind to the interests of the industry, as distinguished from the particular graft and have failed to see the necessity of organizing women and the less-skilled men. The misfortune of women in these trades has been that they have been really too ignorant, too young, too little class-conscious, to take a line of their own and stand by it ; they have constantly been merely passive instruments in the struggle between employers and trade unions, now pushed a little further on by the employers, now pulled a little further off by the men. Very little consideration of fitting the work to the physical condition of the women has ever appeared on either side, the men having objected to work as putting too great a strain on women for the most part only when it was work done in competition with themselves.

Into this complicated situation came in 1914 the war, and early in 1915 the new factor of an enormous demand for munitions and materials of war, concurrently with an unexampled depletion of male labour for military service. The result has been that women have been drafted into the metal and engineering trades in ever-increasing numbers, most of them from other factory industries or from the national " reserve " created by the marriage of industrial women, but many also from domestic service, dress-making, or from classes in which wage-earning work has not yet become customary even for single women. In such vast numbers little organisation or common tradition existed to bind them together. The settlement of wages has been a matter of great difficulty. Early in 1915 the trade unions secured an agreement with the employers that women doing the work previously done by " skilled tradesmen " should receive " the usual rates of the district for the operations performed." This looked very well on paper and the A.S.E. expressed themselves satisfied. But as it turned out this particular agreement did not apply to any very considerable proportion of the women employed. The large majority of workers employed before the war in shell and fuse factories were semi-skilled or unskilled men ; and in the second place, a readjustment of the process was almost inevitable in the comparatively rare case of an inexperienced woman taking the place of a skilled tradesman (' Women in the Engineering Trades,'

pp. 16-17). Thus the bargain was in reality very favourable to the employers. Such ambiguities have been numerous.

It is impossible here to reproduce the complicated negotiations, the endless " orders " and regulations made by Government departments, the numerous facts and figures as to wages and output so ably summarised by Mrs. Drake. We hope very much that our readers will procure the book and study it for themselves. It gives a minute and careful account of happenings during a fateful crisis in the evolution of industry. It shows that the condition of women munition workers is far less rosy, and industrial relations generally far more complicated, than the public supposes or understands; and it demonstrates once more, in the plainest possible way, the enormous importance to the woman worker of effective organisation.